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Committee Asks Record $6M To Investigate Assassinations

By JOSEPH VOLZ

Washington (News Bureau)—The House Select Committee on Assassinations voted yesterday to ask for a record $6.5 million to spend next year investigating in the murders of President John F. Kennedy and the Rev. Dr. Martin Luther King Jr.

Congressional old-timers said that no House or Senate committee in memory has ever spent that much money in just one year. But Richard Sprague, the former Philadelphia prosecutor who is the committee's chief counsel, said the money was needed and the job would be "impossible" if the full House decided to cut the huge budget next month.

Sprague also plans to hire a staff of 170 — another record number — which he said was the "bare-bones minimum" the committee needs.

Richard Sprague
Says money is needed

Others Spent Like $2 Million

By comparison, the House Judiciary Committee's Nixon impeachment inquiry in 1974 employed a staff of 100 and spent less than $2 million. The Senate Watergate Committee, another major Capitol Hill effort, spent about $2 million during its 18-month investigation.

The size of Sprague's request caught some committee members by surprise. Rep. Henry B. Gonzalez (D-Tex.), the incoming chairman, actually thought that the figure represented the total for the two years that the investigation will take. But no one objected to the price tag, and one member, Rep. Stewart McKinney (R-Conn.), said, "If we're not going to be given the tools (sufficient money) ... then I would have to withdraw from the committee."

Sprague said that, unlike other congressional committees, the panel will not use FBI agents or tap the CIA because the performance of those two agencies is one of the matters to be investigated. The CIA failed to tell the Warren Commission, which investigated the Kennedy assassination in 1964, that it had plotted to kill Cuban Premier Fidel Castro. The FBI also destroyed at least one document showing contacts that FBI agents had with Lee Harvey Oswald before the Kennedy assassination.

Sprague said he will set up two separate staffs to handle each case. He said 25 investigators will examine the Kennedy case, while another 25 will investigate the King case. Each staff will have 15 attorneys.

The committee will also lire its own lie-detector team — another Capitol Hill first — with four polygraph operators to be paid $30,000 each.